

Nina Vivian Huryn  
14414 Detroit Ave.-300  
Lakewood, Ohio 44107  
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I attended The Cleveland Institute of Art from 1970 to 1975, graduating with a B.F.A. in Textile Design and Ceramics. After graduation I continued my work in Wearable Art and painting. I received Individual Artists Grants from The Ohio Arts Council in 1979 and 1980. In 1980 I moved to New York City, where I lived and worked for five years. I have moved back to Cleveland, my studio is in Lakewood.

I have exhibited constantly, nationally and internationally, helping gain recognition for the Wearable Art movement. I have been showing at Julie: Artisan's Gallery, Inc. in New York City for fourteen years. In 1987 Julie Schafler Dale ("Julie") wrote a lavishly illustrated book entitled "Art To Wear" (Abbeville Press). In it she defines and traces the history of Art to Wear and the Art to Wear movement. Sixteen pages are devoted to text and photographs of my work.

In the spring of 1990 I was one of three American artists chosen by The Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon, Portugal, to attend the opening of "Traje Um Objeto Dé Arte?" (Clothing, an Art Object?). This was a fabulous exhibition of Art to Wear from America, Europe and Brasil, it left no doubt that fashion can be a work of art! As guests of the museum we toured the city and attended the gala opening of the exhibition and a dinner at the museum. A wonderful gift.

A San Francisco based non-profit, educational public television station, KQED-TV, has produced a sixty minute P.B.S. documentary on the Wearable Art movement- "Artwear: The Body Adorned". The documentary includes the work of notable artists in the field, including myself, as well as a brief history of the movement with comments from experts in the costume and fashion world. This documentary will be broadcast worldwide in the spring of 1991.

My work is influenced by the industrial, urban environment of the North American rust belt area - Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and New York and New Jersey. Steel mills, oar boats, factories, blast furnaces, refineries, railroad yards, cars, garages, freeways, bars, and bridges are all represented in my wearable art and construction paintings. Relief from this industrial world can be found in the hot quiet glass houses of botanical gardens, amid transplanted orchids and tropical trees. Other influences are more frivolous, such as amusement parks, car races and carnivals while counterbalanced by the macabre, masquerades, spirits or familiars.

The skeleton appears throughout my work either as large ribcage patterns, spinal designs and as entire human or animal skeletons. They are important in my work, representing humans as guides in their most structural, basic form. The skeleton is the structural framework for human life, and though it is often thought of as the symbol of death, the forms in my work are far from dead, but strong lively signs of hope in our world today. They are eternally cavorting, happily enjoying life to the fullest



even though they are in a death or negative form.

Those skeletons can be found surviving terrible accidents, never fatal- you can't kill a skeleton!- in scenes tooled in raw leather on leather chaps, capes and jackets. They climb transformer towers, explore toxic waste polluted swamps, and explode from the ruins of newly demolished buildings. The skeletons flutter across the back of a kimono, on wings of crushed matchbooks. Then they sleep, appliqued in satins and ribbon on jackets and capes. Blazing, vibrating, radiating brilliant colors and heat-giving life to the gardens, plants, and trees while life goes on above them.

My wearable work is usually of fabrics, painted, silkscreened and heavily appliqued - or leather with large sections of highly detailed tooled leather, telling a story. Their shapes are strongly influenced by either the natural shape of the piece of leather or oriental kimono forms and medieval European and Japanese armor. As with all my work it is to be touched as well as looked at, and hopefully worn - enabling it to come to life. The finished work is often accented with street elements- crushed bottle caps, sheetrock, reflector chips, old cleats, flattened matchbooks and other unidentifiable pieces of urban rubbish. Using these elements, otherwise thought of as garbage, as decorations shows a humorous, beautiful side of a way of life that could otherwise be thought of as dirty or futile.



JAN. 1, 1989

## PORTRAIT

# Artist rattles creative world with her skeletons designs

By HELEN CULLINAN  
ART CRITIC

**N**ina Vivian Huryn was working in her West Side studio on "Plums, Wasps and Skeletons," a gorgeously ornate coat appliqued in saffron purples, blues, greens and golds. It looked as if a Chinese emperor might have worn it.

She didn't say much about the process, perhaps considering that self-explanatory, or immaterial to anyone but herself. Self-evident to say that the piece involved endless hours of dyeing, painting, applique stitching and just plain sewing. She volunteered, as a New Year's resolution, that she will keep a log on her next project — which might alternately be of tooled and painted leather — to determine just how long it takes her to make an art-to-wear piece.

More importantly, from her point of view, she talked about the story related in the imagery on the "Plums, Wasps and Skeletons" coat, pointing to the elements pictured:

"This is a plum tree, and that is the setting sun at the end of the fall," she said. "There are only a few plum leaves left, and only a few of the last wasps before the frost kills them all and they die. And these are the skeletons sleeping at the bottom of the garden."

Although it is primarily an aesthetic achievement of surface embellishment, Huryn regards the scene as a moment in a universal cycle. It's the kind of world view that characterizes her approach as a master storyteller of art to wear, finding gentle poetry in the faintly surreal — and some might say macabre — scenarios of life and death that she interprets. Initially she borrowed others' stories, favoring J.R.R. Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings." Now she composes her own.

Most of her plots are livelier than the *fin de l'été* garden scene on the coat. Other garments — capes, gowns, tops, two-pieces — incorporate tales of skeletons' adventures in the search for the Holy Grail, or invading worlds of nuclear pollution, mutations and carnivorous flowers. One adventure finds the skeletons wandering through a swamp to an auto graveyard, only to be zapped by the evil Reddy Kilowatt, disguised as a beautiful angel.

According to the mildly shamanic Huryn, none of these skeletons is menacing or spooky — "They're just there. They're just part of everything, and growing things. Mine aren't very realistic. I find them appealing," she said. "When I was a child, my favorite television program was the 'Little Rascals' episode where the children marched in skeleton suits and the monkey ran away with a skull on his head. . . . Some people who know my work say, 'Put in lots of skeletons.' Others say, 'Don't.'"

Henry H. Hawley, curator of later Western art at the Cleveland Museum of Art, said, "I have the feeling that death is important to Nina because in our society it is mostly denied, and she quite rightly feels that it ought to be faced more matter-of-factly. She is totally honest though very private. She resists verbal explanations of what she does."

Julie Schaffer Dale, owner of Julie Artisans Gallery on Madison Avenue in New York, has handled Huryn's works for nearly a decade. She discusses Huryn at length in her lavish book on "Art to Wear" (Abbeville Press, 1987), saying that:



PHOTOGRAPH BY ROADELL HICKMAN

**NINA VIVIAN HURYN:** "Some people who know my work say, 'Put in lots of skeletons.' Others say, 'Don't.'"

"Nina works with the richness of a child's imagination that allows good and evil to exist without boundaries. She spins fairy tales that entwine reality and fantasy in a world peopled with good and bad guys embroiled in life-and-death struggles that do not end in death. . . . Skeletons, long past the sadness of death, romp and cavort in the industrial landscapes Nina borrows from our reality or in more private realms born of the artist's imagination."

The British-born Huryn came to Cleveland with her family as a child and considers it home. As a high school rock 'n' roll fan, she regularly won Plain Dealer cartoon contests offering free concert tickets. At 18, she was selling her elegantly tooled handmade leather accessories at Halle's. She also won a scholarship to the Cleveland Institute of Art (1975). In 1980, she won the \$1,000 May Show crafts prize at the Cleveland Museum of Art for a painting on leather and wood ("Fumigation of Coney Island") portraying skeletons cavorting in an amusement park.

In the 1988 May Show, she showed a tooled and painted leather rodeo outfit, and a sleeveless top made of pop-can tabs picked up on the street. Found objects frequently find their way into Huryn's art. As Dale describes it, "Walking with her head down, fascinated by the 'ugly things' on the sidewalk, Nina became a junk collector. She washes and sterilizes the bottle caps, reflectors and odd bits of city landscape that encrust her garments. . . ."

From the time she began art school in the '70s, Huryn was headed for art-to-wear fame, dressed to the hilt in exotically way-out clothes that she made her-

self, adopting a heavy-metal look. She majored in textile design, which offered flexibility of techniques, and minored in ceramics. She dislikes the connotation of fiber artist or fashion designer implied in the art-to-wear field. "I am an artist, *period*, who uses fabrics and leather and other materials," she said.

Huryn has worked in layout design here and in New York to support her art. She also has worked closely with her sister, photographer Rebecca Huryn McBride, as a model and studio stylist. After five years in New York, she responded to the lure of affordable larger studio and living space — and a lovingly nurtured roof garden — in Cleveland.

"I go back to New York about four times a year to see friends and buy materials that you can't find here," she said. "I don't feel that I need to be there on a permanent basis. Everyone in New York is struggling just to pay the rent to live there."

Huryn is struggling to find time to complete all the work she wants to do. There is a steady stream of show invitations. This month and next she will be showing at the Julie Artisans Gallery in New York, at the Bellevue Museum near Seattle, and at the Los Angeles County Museum. She takes custom commissions and regularly makes one-size-fits-all pieces scaled to taller persons.

Her works sell to a special genre of collector/performer clientele. They include Cleveland art deco expert Berenice Kent, for whom Huryn made a Gustave Klimt dress after seeing the Vienna Secession show in New York. She was relieved when rock singer Elton John didn't sell her cape at his clothing auction. He had bought it at Julie's.



FUTURE EVENTS

ARTWEAR: THE BODY ADORNED  
WQED-TV

A 60 minute PBS documentary on the wearable art movement, to be broadcast worldwide in the Spring of 1991. work by Nina Vivian Huryn will be featured.

PRESENT GENERATION: New Workings in Fiber  
Great Northern Corporate Center  
Great Northern boulevard  
North Olmsted, Ohio

November 20-February 24, 1991



14414 Detroit Ave. - 300  
Lakewood 44107

OCT 11 1990

October 3, 1990

Dear Mr. Hinson,

Thank you for your interest in my work. There is a selection of slides. Some examples are currently on exhibit at the Sandusky Cultural Center in Sandusky, Ohio — "Sticks and Stones and Bones", a group show including the work of Gary Spinosi, George Kocar, myself and others. All work in the show is made of or about ... you guessed it, sticks, stones, and bones!

Next month I will be included in another group show "Present Generations: New Workings in Fiber", at the Great Northern Corporate Center — opening November 20. If you'd like to see more slides of my work — I will be photographing pieces completed for this show in about four weeks. Write again then and I can send you more slides.

Thank you again for noticing me.

Sincerely,  
Nina Vora



RECENT EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS

STICKS AND STONES AND BONES Group Show

SANDUSKY CULTURAL CENTER  
2130 Hayes Avenue  
Sandusky, Ohio 44870

September 30 - October 28, 1990

TRAJE UM OBJETO DE ARTE?

GULBENKIAN MUSEUM  
Lisbon, Portugal

May 23 - June 24, 1990

ART TO WEAR GROUP SHOW

MOBILIA  
358 Huron Avenue  
Cambridge, Mass.

April 14 - May 31, 1990

with Benefit Fashion Show  
FULLER ART MUSEUM  
Brockton, Mass.

Sunday May 20, 1990

ARTFORMS AND THE BODY

GINZA GALLERY  
Tokyo, Japan

February 23 - March 11, 1990

NINA VIVIAN HURYN: New Work

JULIE ARTISAN'S GALLERY, INC.  
687 Madison Avenue  
New York City, New York 10021

February 2 - February 15, 1990

WEARABLE ART NINA VIVIAN HURYN

WITTENBORN & HOLLINGSWORTH  
8742 A Melrose Avenue  
Los Angeles, California 90069

October 5 - 28, 1989



ARTFORMS AND THE BODY

WITTENBORN & HOLLINGSWORTH  
Los Angeles, California

March 9 - April 8, 1989

with FASHION SHOW at  
THE L. A. COUNTY MUSEUM  
Los Angeles, California  
February 28, 1989

ARTWEAR

BELLEVUE ART MUSEUM  
301 Bellevue Square  
Bellevue, Washington 98004

February 1 - 28, 1989

with Fashion Event "ART WEAR: WEAR THE ART IS"  
New Hyatt Hotel  
Bellevue, Washington  
January 28, 1989

FINERY

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Raleigh, North Carolina

September 9 - November 6, 1988

1988 MAY SHOW

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART  
11150 East Boulevard  
Cleveland, Ohio

April - July, 1988

ART TO WEAR GROUP SHOW

MOBILIA  
Cambridge, Mass.

April 2 - 30, 1988

WHAT'S NEW IN WEARABLES?

MURRAY HILL SCHOOL  
(Cleveland Wellesley Club)  
Cleveland Heights, Ohio

February 25, 1988



NINA VIVIAN HURYN: New Work

JULIE ARTISAN'S GALLERY  
New York City, New York

January 22 - February 4, 1988

ART TO WEAR

THE CLEVELAND CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART - GALLERIA  
CLEVELAND, OHIO

December 7 - January 16, 1988

TRAJE UM OBJETO D'É ARTE?

RIO DESIGN CENTER  
Rio De Janeiro, Brasil  
August 18 - 30, 1987

MUSEUM DE ARTE DE SÃO PAULO  
San Paulo, Brasil  
July 7 - 26, 1987

LAKEWOOD ARTS FESTIVAL 1987 - August 1  
Nina Huryn - Judge



THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART  
ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

MAY 80



Please complete and return the following questionnaire for our reference file on Cleveland Artists.

FULL NAME: NINA VIVIAN HURYN

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH: MARCH 4, 1952 - BEVERLY, ENGLAND

PRIMARY MEDIA FABRIC, LEATHER, WOOD.

ART TRAINING - Schools, Scholarships, etc.:

B.F.A. CLEVELAND INSTITUTE OF ART 1970-1975

$\frac{1}{2}$  Tuition Honorary Scholarships - 1970, 1972, 1974  
Major - Textile Design (Gwen-Lin Goo)

EXHIBITIONS IN WHICH YOUR WORK HAS BEEN SHOWN:

MAY SHOW - 1976, 1977, 1978

"LET US BE YOUR FANTASY" - ZENITH GALLERY, WASH. D.C. DEC. 1979  
"DESIGNERS OF THE 80's, PART II" - XENON DISCOTHEQUE, N.Y.C. MAY '79  
"NINA HURYN, FEATURED ARTIST" - JULIE; ARTISAN GALLERY INC. N.Y.C. - APRIL 1979  
SLIDE SHOW, LECTURE - NINA HURYN - CLEVELAND INSTITUTE OF ART APRIL 19, '79  
BALTIMORE WINTER MARKET OF CRAFTS FEB. '79  
"DOLLS" - JULIE ARTISAN GALLERY INC. - DEC. '78  
COLLECTIONS WHICH NOW INCLUDE YOUR WORK:

Mrs. BERENICE H. KENT

THE Ohio Craft Invitational Shows  
- Mansfield Art Center - Aug. '78  
NINA HURYN, GARY SPANOSA, ROBERTA  
WILLIAMSON - Baldwin Wallace Art  
& Drama Center Nov. 1977

BEYOND THE BODY TERRAIN -  
Maxo Gallery Chicago Ill. Jan. 1979

FANTASY FASHIONS PURCHASED BY: Ms. BERENICE H. KENT, MRS. DUSTIN HOFFMAN, CANDICE BERGEN FOR  
LINA WERTMUELLER, FREDDIE MERCURY, AND BRIAN MAY

AWARDS:

MAY SHOW JURY MENTION - 1976, 1977

OAC MINI GRANT - 1978

OAC ARTIST FELLOWSHIP GRANT \$3,000. - 1979

PRESENT POSITION: ARTIST, STUDIO IN HOME

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We would appreciate any information regarding subsequent awards, purchases, exhibitions and scholarships.  
Thank you for your cooperation.